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Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 6 June 1991, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. JASINSKI (Poland)

CONTENTS

Special programmes of assistance

(c) Refugees, displaced persons and returnees

Other funds and programmes

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ASSISTANCE

(c) REFUGEES, DISPLACED PERSONS AND RETURNEES (DP/1991/20)

1. Mr. PRIESTLEY (Senior Adviser for Humanitarian Affairs), introducing the agenda item, said that it stemmed from Governing Council decision 90/22. That decision had: emphasized that development programmes could promote durable solutions to emergencies involving displaced persons and refugees; stressed that relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development were part of a continuum, and that the role of the Resident Coordinator should be recognized in that context; supported the agreement between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to draw up annual joint work programmes and the continued participation of UNDP in supporting Governments in areas affected by large-scale population displacements, in close collaboration with other United Nations agencies and programmes and non-governmental organizations; authorized the Administrator to utilize Special Programme Resources in assessing the needs arising from population displacement; and invited the Economic and Social Council to request the Secretary-General to initiate a review of the capacity of the United Nations system to assist affected countries in meeting the needs of refugees, displaced persons and returnees.

2. Document DP/1991/20 had been based on several key considerations. First, as the report of the Economic and Social Council would not be issued until the following month, care had been taken to avoid including in the document any proposal which might pre-empt the Economic and Social Council's decision.

3. Secondly, the emphasis had been placed on utilizing the potential of the UNDP field structure in a manner which complemented, rather than conflicted with, the mandates of other organizations of the United Nations system. UNDP had a network of 114 field offices which was at the service of both the host countries and the United Nations system as a whole; UNDP representatives frequently acted on behalf of a number of United Nations agencies which did not have direct representation in the country concerned. Thus a high priority had been placed on forging close and practical links with those organizations.

4. Thirdly, attention had been concentrated on the relief and development spectrum. The bureaucratic separation of emergency responses from normal development planning often hampered the effective management of both relief and development efforts. Prevention and preparedness programmes were also a prominent feature of the combined approach.

5. Appropriate training for UNDP staff and staff members of other organizations before, during and after emergencies was essential. Training courses funded under the Disaster Management Training Programme had already begun. The Programme, jointly managed by UNDP and the Office of the United

(Mr. Priestley)

Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO), had recruited staff members from several United Nations agencies as trainers, and had already attracted the support of major donor countries.

6. Clearly, maximum use should be made of UNDP institutions. The regional bureaux would be central to all operational and policy issues, in close collaboration with the Bureau for Programme Policy and Evaluation. Technical cooperation among developing countries was particularly appropriate in the context of famine prevention and preparedness strategies. The use of United Nations Volunteers in situations involving displaced populations had been extraordinarily effective. In the aftermath of the Gulf crisis, 60 United Nations Volunteers were either working or about to be assigned to various agencies. The experience of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) was obviously of great relevance, since more than 70 per cent of the world's displaced persons were women and children. Lastly, a strong emphasis should be placed on evaluation, so as to build up an institutional memory and thereby increase programme effectiveness.

7. Over the next few years, efforts would be made to strengthen the already excellent relationship between UNDP and UNHCR in the search for durable solutions to refugee problems. Likewise, the long-standing partnership between UNDP and UNDRO and other United Nations agencies needed to be developed.

8. Turning to the proposed humanitarian programmes support unit, he said that the proposal for a new headquarters unit might appear to be at odds with current streamlining concerns. However, in recent years there had been an upsurge in emergencies, resulting in displacement and suffering on an unprecedented scale. The UNDP field office network had been at the forefront of the international community's response, and had required substantial assistance and backstopping from headquarters. In addition, the resident representatives in six African countries were acting as the Secretary-General's special coordinators for Emergency Relief Operations. UNDP had also been heavily involved in the efforts of the United Nations system to respond to the humanitarian needs arising from the Gulf crisis.

9. In the next few years, developing countries were likely to face further emergencies, resulting in an even higher level of suffering and economic damage. In Africa alone, there were more than 13 million displaced persons and 5.4 million refugees. Even as he spoke, as many as 300,000 Sudanese refugees who had been forced out of Ethiopia were facing grim prospects in the strife-torn swamp areas of southern Sudan.

10. Against that background, the Administrator had proposed the establishment, on an experimental basis, of the humanitarian programmes support unit. The Administrator was determined that the proposed unit should not become in any way operationally independent, but should provide support both to the field and to headquarters. Its primary responsibility would be to

(Mr. Priestley)

ensure liaison with other organizations of the United Nations system involved in emergency assistance and with bilateral donors and non-governmental organizations. It would also, in close consultation with the regional bureaux and the Bureau for Programme and Evaluation, promote activities relating to emergency preparedness within the programming and project cycles of UNDP, including UNDP participation in the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction.

11. Mr. KABA (Senior Adviser, New York Office, Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator) said that UNDRO welcomed the establishment of a formal focal point within UNDP to follow matters relating to emergencies, including those relating to refugees and displaced persons.

12. Recent emergencies world wide seemed to have captured the attention, not only of Governments around the world, but also of United Nations bodies. Such increased interest in disaster mitigation and relief was cause for satisfaction. However, when it came to saving lives and making the best possible use of scarce resources, it was important for mitigation and relief operations to be well coordinated and effective.

13. To the outside observer, it might sometimes seem that each organization of the United Nations was attempting to cover the whole spectrum of relief activities. When an emergency occurred, it appeared to be difficult for agencies to confine themselves to their field of specialization. At times, it was as if the organization which was first to arrive on the scene became the de facto lead agency for relief efforts. What was needed, therefore, was a clear division of responsibilities in order to avoid misallocation of resources and disorganization of the operation.

14. With regard to the proposed new unit within UNDP, it should be recalled that UNDP resident representatives were ex officio UNDRO representatives at the country level. Their mandate in that regard derived from the mandate of UNDRO. That was the first and most direct link between UNDRO and UNDP. A second important link between the two organizations was in the area of disaster mitigation, which should be effectively built into the development process. Furthermore, since the responsibility of UNDRO ended with the relief phase, rehabilitation and reconstruction should be carried out by UNDP.

15. Obviously, the effectiveness of the two organizations' action at the country level, in both relief and mitigation, depended largely upon the quality of their cooperation and on visible support from the UNDP Administration at headquarters. In that context, he welcomed the establishment of the unit as an effective counterpart to UNDRO which should further strengthen the overall cooperation between UNDRO and UNDP.

16. Mr. PETERS (Director, New York Liaison Office, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that since the adoption in 1951 of the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the problems of uprooted populations, of which refugees were a significant proportion, had multiplied. In the first quarter of 1991 alone, the refugee population had grown by about 2 million, as Kurds and other Iraqi nationals had sought refuge, and as hundreds of thousands had fled from continuing conflicts in the Horn of Africa and Liberia.

17. In addition to the approximately 17 million refugees, a nearly equal number of persons had been displaced from their homes and rendered destitute; they frequently had no civil rights. Approximately 70 per cent were women and children who were struggling to survive in the poorest regions of the poorest countries in the world.

18. A number of practical and operational initiatives had been taken over the past year in accordance with Governing Council decision 90/22, General Assembly resolution 44/137 and decisions of the Executive Committee of UNHCR on the need for a coordinated approach by the United Nations system in general and UNDP and UNHCR in particular.

19. Those initiatives had led to broad agreement between UNDP and UNHCR on a joint work programme which focused on: identifying areas of cooperation at the regional, subregional and country levels; formulating joint programmes; and making appropriate management training arrangements so as to better prepare UNHCR and UNDP staff for the emergency and longer-term development phases of coping with the problems raised by uprootedness. Subsequently, copies of a joint letter signed by the UNDP Administrator and the High Commissioner outlining the main objectives of the joint work programme and requesting the support and the direct participation of the field offices in their fulfilment had been sent to all UNDP and UNHCR field representatives. Document DP/1991/20 contained a comprehensive report on the progress made on the joint work programme and on other joint ventures which had not been foreseen, such as the system-wide interventions in several emergency operations.

20. Key objectives for the following year must include: a more intensive pursuit of the ongoing joint work programme; the establishment of a common strategy with other relevant agencies, including non-governmental organizations; joint planning and programme development starting at the field level and the mobilization of additional resources; the harmonization of criteria, indicators and other planning, implementation and monitoring parameters with a view to the institutionalization of coordination; the establishment of evaluation instruments to measure human resources development with special emphasis on the conditions of women and children; the establishment and strengthening, in conjunction with other relevant organizations, of standing arrangements to provide a rapid and effective system-wide response at the outset of major emergencies; the joint planning of exercises for the identification of locations and sectors of activity for

(Mr. Peters)

future joint programme development; and the intensification of joint training and technical support and the sharing of expertise and information.

21. Mr. VAN UFFORD (Netherlands) welcomed the current consensus within the international community on the relationship between emergency aid and development aid. Emergency aid should be linked as much as possible with the development process under way in a disaster-struck region.

22. UNDP had no primary role to play in emergency relief efforts. Its work began in the aftermath of a disaster, in creating the conditions for a speedy recovery of the afflicted areas and the successful reintegration of those uprooted. At the initial stage of any disaster, however, organizations such as UNDRO, UNHCR and the International Committee of the Red Cross would provide the necessary immediate relief.

23. His delegation welcomed the increased cooperation between UNDP and UNHCR and between UNDP and UNDRO, as discussed in document DP/1991/20. The training of UNDP field staff in disaster management was very useful, especially since UNDP representatives in Africa played a significant role in emergency aid.

24. With regard to the proposed humanitarian programmes support unit, which would, among other things, evaluate proposals to be financed from the $500 million Special Programme Resources allocation, his delegation questioned the need to set up a separate unit for that purpose. First, the number of units reporting directly to the Administrator should be limited. Secondly, the functions proposed for the new unit should be carried out by the Special Adviser within the existing UNDP structure. If an emergency situation required UNDP efforts, they should take place in the field and not at headquarters. The emphasis should be on consolidating, strengthening and coordinating UNDP activities in the field.

25. Furthermore, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly were planning to conduct a thorough review of the entire United Nations response to emergency situations. It was important not to pre-empt the outcome of those deliberations by changing the UNDP structure responsible for that area. His delegation proposed that a discussion should be held at the Council's session on the implications of the General Assembly's debate for UNDP emergency relief activities.

26. Ms. SUOMALAINEN (Finland), speaking on behalf of the delegations of Denmark, Norway, Sweden and her own country, said that the Nordic countries had been calling for a system-wide approach to the overlapping activities or gaps in meeting the needs of refugees, returnees and displaced persons. The Nordic United Nations project and General Assembly discussions on the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction and UNDRO had highlighted the emergency response needs and problems of the United Nations system, and valuable ideas had emerged.

(Ms. Suomalainen, Finland)

27. UNDP should not be moulded increasingly into an organization for meeting emergency needs. Instead, it should strengthen its role in areas in which it had a comparative advantage among United Nations organizations and other related actors. Its field structure should be a strong one, and its task should be to help develop national capacities to handle the long-term social and economic consequences of emergencies and increasing problems relating to refugees, displaced persons and returnees. The resident representative's multiple role as country programme manager, resident coordinator and coordinating authority of the United Nations response in emergencies underscored the need to recognize that the issues were interrelated.

28. The appointment of a Senior Adviser for Humanitarian Affairs facilitated UNDP's active participation in the process of clarifying issues relating to the emergency response of the United Nations system in general, and the respective roles of United Nations organizations in particular. The strategic plan of action for field coordination efforts should have been more completely outlined in document DP/1991/20, and the descriptions of UNDP's role, operational response and comparative advantage were merely touched upon. However, the Nordic countries saw no need for the establishment of a separate humanitarian programme support unit within UNDP. The Programme's emergency response and rehabilitation activities should be carried out within the framework of its country programmes and development activities and based, like all its undertakings, on continuous dialogue with affected countries to assess needs and ensure early involvement of national capacities.

29. The Nordic countries welcomed the efforts of UNHCR and UNDP to develop a common database on matters relating to refugees and displaced persons, as well as the joint UNDP/UNDRO management of the Disaster Management Training Programme. However, the idea of recruiting consultants to develop model projects for rapid response in emergency needs assessment was not viable, as such proposals tended to reflect an approach which undermined the mandate of UNDP as the bridge-building organization on the continuum from relief to development. In that connection, she underscored the importance of UNDP assistance to countries in defining preparedness to deal with the developmental needs of returnee populations.

30. The question of how to deal with displaced persons was particularly difficult, since no United Nations organization had a specific mandate in that area. Support for the development of large displaced populations formed an important variable in all needs assessments and in the country programming process of UNDP.

31. The Nordic countries firmly believed that the two studies proposed in paragraph 30 of document DP/1991/20 should not be undertaken by UNDP. The study on the use of market mechanisms for addressing the immediate food needs of vulnerable groups in cases of disaster management fell within the mandate of the World Food Programme, and the question of regional approaches for dealing with refugees, returnees and displaced persons should, at least

(Ms. Suomalainen, Finland)

preliminarily, be addressed by the review - to be discussed at the forthcoming session of the Economic and Social Council.

32. Mr. SEZAKI (Japan) expressed his delegation's appreciation to the resident representatives for their work as resident coordinators during the massive movement of displaced persons in the Persian Gulf region and in other disaster situations.

33. His delegation welcomed UNDP's joint efforts with other agencies concerned, including UNHCR and UNDRO, in the field of disaster management, and supported the idea that UNDP should adjust its normal programme activities to take into account the special development needs of people uprooted by emergency situations. Accordingly, it had no objection to the establishment of a focal point within UNDP to follow up on matters relating to emergencies, including those affecting refugees and displaced persons.

34. However, while it was appropriate for UNDP to strengthen relief-to-development linkages throughout its field operations, thereby strengthening coordination between UNDP and UNDRO, UNDP should neither replace nor assume the functions of UNDRO simply because the latter had extremely limited financial and human resources compared with those of UNDP. The continuum of emergency relief, rehabilitation and development did not imply that UNDP should expand its mandate and become deeply involved with relief and rehabilitation activities. True, there was at times a grey zone wherein activities in those areas overlapped, but the various executing agencies should abide by their own specific mandates in emergency operations, rather than try to expand into that grey zone, and should maintain a clear division of responsibilities in order to avoid duplication of effort.

35. While his delegation recognized the need to establish early warning systems and contingency planning programmes, it was unfortunate that document DP/1991/20 made no reference to the relevant activities of the secretariat of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. That demonstrated a lack of close coordination among executing agencies, a shortcoming which should be corrected in the future.

36. Mr. MISSARY (Observer for Yemen) expressed disappointment that document DP/1991/20 had not been made available to delegations sooner, in all working languages. It was also regrettable that there was no reference in the document to the fact that his country had received 1 million refugees and their families as a result of the Gulf crisis. Developments in the Horn of Africa in May had brought more refugees and displaced persons to Yemen, a situation which had necessitated the postponement or cancellation of many vital projects so that the Government could deal with the emergency. Since his country was among the least developed countries and was itself vulnerable to earthquakes and other natural disasters, it appreciated contributions that had been made to defray some of the expenses relating to the influx of refugees.

(Mr. Missary, Observer, Yemen)

37. He thanked UNDP and the relevant Funds for their work on behalf of refugees and displaced persons, and expressed the hope that Yemen would receive greater support for its efforts in the future.

38. Mr. SOUTTER (Canada) said that in view of the likelihood of a continuing increase in the frequency and possible magnitude of natural and man-made disasters, his country was pleased to sponsor and cooperate in activities related to the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. UNDP deserved the admiration of the entire international community for its efforts in coordinating assistance to the victims of drought and conflict in Ethiopia, the Sudan and elsewhere in the world.

39. UNDP should be commended in particular for its efforts to ensure more effective preparation of its professional staff, particularly resident representatives, for disaster management through the joint UNDP/UNDRO Disaster Management Training Programme. His delegation agreed that emergencies required "a speedy, well-coordinated and highly professional response from the United Nations system", but reserved comment on the proposed humanitarian programmes support unit pending clarification of its anticipated disaster preparedness and management training activities and their relationship to activities currently carried out under the UNDP/UNDRO Disaster Management Training Programme. It would also appreciate information on the improved coordination of relief efforts within the United Nations system.

40. Pending those clarifications, he encouraged UNDP to present interested Governments with a more detailed rationalization of the proposed activities on behalf of refugees, displaced persons and returnees. As currently envisaged, the proposed unit would be part of the UNDP administration and therefore should be financed from its administrative budget.

41. Mr. FONDI (Italy) commended UNDP, with its rich experience at the field level, for its efforts on behalf of refugees, returnees and displaced persons. While UNDP could deal with certain specific aspects of relief and emergency aid, it should concentrate its action in the field of recovery, rehabilitation and development programmes to benefit refugees. In the interests of efficiency and cost-effectiveness, cooperation at the headquarters and local levels between UNDP and other relevant United Nations bodies, particularly UNHCR, was essential in order to avoid overlapping and duplication of efforts. Commendable examples of such coordination were the UNDP/UNHCR collaboration in Quang Ninh province of Viet Nam and the "team approach" described in the report (DP/1991/20, para. 28). While his delegation did not object in principle to the proposed establishment of a humanitarian programmes support unit, it would be wiser to await the system-wide study of capacity in matters pertaining to refugees before taking a decision on the proposal.

(Mr. Fondi, Italy)

42. In conclusion, his delegation was pleased with the manner in which UNDP was managing the Regional Development Programme for Displaced Persons in Central America. His Government planned to provide more than $US 100 million over a five-year period, including $US 20 million in 1991. Coordination of the programme with UNHCR was proceeding very well.

43. Mr. HARRISON (United Kingdom) said that recent events in many parts of the world underscored the need for a speedy, well-coordinated and highly professional response to emergencies from the United Nations system (DP/1991/20, para. 32). UNDP should play its full part in that regard, in coordination with other relevant agencies, particularly at the field level. His country would continue to support the activities described in the report.

44. While his delegation was sympathetic to the idea of establishing a humanitarian programmes support unit, a careful review of the administrative and budgetary aspects was needed. With respect to the proposed development of an "institutional memory" for UNDP referred to in paragraph 35 of the report, the issue was not confined to UNDP: it sometimes seemed as if the United Nations believed it needed to reinvent the wheel each time there was a major disaster. The work to be carried out in the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly concerning refugees and displaced persons and, more generally, the United Nations response to humanitarian emergencies, also had to be taken into account.

45. Ms. POLLACK (United States of America) said that there was an emerging international consensus that the United Nations emergency humanitarian response capability must be institutionalized and regularized, possibly in the context of other United Nations reforms. Her delegation greatly appreciated UNDP's efforts to improve the ability of the United Nations to respond to emergencies and, therefore, as an interim measure, it supported the establishment of a humanitarian programmes support unit, pending careful consideration of the recommendations of the Economic and Social Council in the light of the system-wide review to be discussed at that Council's next session. The continuation of the unit in the next biennium must be considered in the context of more systematic approaches to the emergency humanitarian response capacity of the United Nations. Her delegation felt very strongly that the proposed unit should be funded from administrative funds and not from Special Programme Resource funds.

46. Mr. TANTOT (France), underscoring the importance of ensuring the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance and development assistance in areas affected by natural disasters or massive population displacements, said that the role of the resident representatives, in their capacity as representatives of UNDRO, was critical for such coordination. In that connection, it was unfortunate that the Action Plan of the International Conference on Central American Refugees had taken inadequate account of the activities of non-governmental organizations and that cooperation between UNDP and UNHCR had developed too slowly. UNDP should help to establish conditions

(Mr. Tantot, France)

conducive to development, which alone could prevent economically motivated migrations, and should facilitate the return of refugees by restoring such conditions in refugee communities. UNDP should serve as a source of inspiration within the United Nations system and should strive to prevent the permanent settlement of refugees in territories other than their own.

47. That dual role of development catalyst and coordinator should prevail, in order to avoid confusion as to terms of reference and duplication of work. His delegation therefore agreed with the representative of the Netherlands that the focus should be on cooperation in the field. The desirability of establishing a humanitarian programmes support unit should be decided only after the issues to which he had referred had been thoroughly addressed.

48. Mr. SAHLMANN (Germany) said that agreement was needed on the best way to streamline the capacities of UNDP, UNDRO, UNHCR and the Secretariat, enabling them so that they could respond to disasters and cope with increasing flows of refugees as effectively and efficiently as possible. His delegation looked forward to the discussions at the forthcoming session of the Economic and Social Council, and perhaps at the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly, on the definition of UNDP's role and institutional capacity.

49. If, ultimately, it was decided to establish the proposed humanitarian programmes support unit, it should be funded from the administrative budget of UNDP and not from Special Programme Resources.

50. Mr. GOMEZ (Associate Administrator) said that the Administrator was pleased with the reaction in the Council to UNDP's activities with respect to refugees, displaced persons and returnees. UNDP was fully committed, as a programme operating under the authority of the Secretary-General and under the supervision of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and, where relevant, the Security Council, to playing whatever role was assigned to it in respect of an issue which, while clearly of pressing humanitarian importance, was also clearly related to the maintenance of peace and security. The role of UNDP in the Gulf crisis was a case in point.

51. UNDP intended to adhere to its mandate and, in so doing, to support the mandates of other organizations, not just for legalistic reasons, but for very simple reasons of efficiency, and in recognition of relative advantages that each offered. The Administrator had already expressed his conviction that there was a real need for a well-articulated, coordinated response to emergency issues on the part of United Nations entities. For the moment, UNDP must operate within established boundaries in fulfilling its dual role of developing policy and programme guidelines at the central programming level, and coordinating the contributions of the United Nations system towards building national capabilities at the field level. Within the continuum of relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development, emergency response activities actually moved in a continuous loop, since development activities included the enhancement of national capabilities for emergency prevention and preparedness.

52. Mr. PRIESTLEY (Senior Adviser for Humanitarian Affairs) said he was glad that no reservations had been expressed about the practicality of the relief-development continuum approach. However, as the representative of Japan had pointed out, the application of that approach to the somewhat fragmented United Nations system had resulted in areas of overlap. Although the system's development activities could be improved, the improvement of its response to emergencies was more urgent. The international community's heightened interest in emergency response was very encouraging in that respect.

53. The UNDP resident representatives, in their capacity as UNDRO representatives, resident coordinators and WFP representatives, were deeply involved in relief operations and, in serious cases, had been asked by the Secretary-General to work full time on emergency relief issues. The model for emergency response which had been developed over the previous 10 years and refined during the 1984 crisis in Ethiopia was still valid. Under that system, the resident coordinator was given a professional staff, usually through bilateral contributions, to help him in coordinating relief activities with the host Government, United Nations agencies, donors and non-governmental organizations. Since such coordination depended heavily on the availability of adequate data, the collection, analysis and dissemination of information was a priority for the coordinating units. The resident coordinator also played a leading role in needs assessment and baseline studies, as well as in developing a unified system for appeals to donors on behalf of Governments. The resident coordinator reported regularly on the progress of relief operations and on the mobilization of funds and the identification of unmet needs, and acted as the focal point for press relations.

54. Those UNDP activities, as well as UNDP assistance to Governments in developing early warning systems and prevention and preparedness strategies, were carried out without encroachment on the mandates of other organizations. In view of ever-increasing needs, it was essential for UNDP to further professionalize its emergency response, at all points of the continuum, by establishing a professional backstopping unit at headquarters. Although the considerable expertise of UNHCR was available to UNDP, the latter should be enabled to reach out to the international community for professional assistance in the field. For the proposed humanitarian programmes support unit, only two new posts were being requested: one for an expert on displaced persons and one for an expert on the development of prevention and preparedness strategies and immediate emergency responses. The establishment of such a unit would in no way pre-empt the outcome of Economic and Social Council discussions; it was simply an in-house measure to improve the UNDP capacity for emergency response.

55. The relationship of UNDP with UNDRO in natural disaster management and with UNHCR in the management of the human problems resulting from such disasters was of vital importance. The progress achieved to date through the programme outlined in the joint letter issued by UNDP and UNHCR had been disappointing because of staff shortages and preoccupation with the Persian Gulf crisis. Although the war in the Gulf had ended, a number of other crises

(Mr. Priestley)

identified in the letter, such as those in Liberia, Rwanda and the Horn of Africa, still remained to be addressed; there were, as yet, no political accords in those areas which would allow even basic relief operations to be carried out.

56. In reply to the point raised by the representative of Japan regarding early warning systems, he noted that a meeting would take place shortly in Geneva, under the auspices of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, on the subject of early warning systems. Millions of dollars had been invested in the development of such systems over the years, particularly in Asia and the Caribbean. In reply to the representative of Yemen, he noted that the long-term response of UNDP to the consequences of the Gulf war would be outlined in document DP/1991/60, and that the request for assistance submitted by Yemen would be considered by the Project Appraisal Committee (PAC) on 7 June 1991.

57. He agreed with the representative of France that the dynamism, high morale and potential for progress of refugee communities was too often overlooked. Much more should be done at the field level to develop the self-help capacities of such communities, and he hoped that closer collaboration with non-governmental organizations in that area would prove fruitful. The overall issue of practical relations between United Nations bodies and non-governmental organizations would be addressed shortly by a team of consultants currently being assembled for that purpose.

58. Reverting to the proposed humanitarian programmes support unit, he said that the proposed funding system for the unit was not ideal and that funding from the core budget would be preferable. In view of the reservations which had been expressed regarding the unit, its establishment on a one-year trial basis would be acceptable.

59. Mr. MISSARY (Observer for Yemen) said he hoped that the PAC would take due account of the situation in his country in reviewing Yemen's request for assistance. The forthcoming report on the long-term UNDP response to the consequences of the Gulf war should include a summary of the current situation with respect to refugees, displaced persons and returnees, since their situation was an integral part of the issue. It should also include information on objectives and recent developments in the Horn of Africa: the situation there had given rise to the flow of thousands of refugees into Yemen.

60. Mr. ALOM (Observer for Bangladesh) said that in recent years, the UNDP response to natural disasters in his country, particularly the cyclone of April 1991, and to the serious effects of the Persian Gulf crisis on Bangladesh had been extremely supportive. However, he agreed with other delegations that certain practical issues must be addressed before a decision could be taken on the establishment of a humanitarian programmes support unit. Such a unit might be required to address issues involving responses to all types of emergencies, from natural disasters to political, social and

(Mr. Alom, Observer, Bangladesh)

economic crises. The nature and extent of the proposed unit's involvement in emergencies must therefore be precisely defined.

61. Coordination seemed to be the main problem which the proposal was intended to address. However, that aim could also be accomplished by strengthening the role of the resident coordinators to enable them to carry out their responsibilities to the full extent of their mandates. There was a need for greater coherence in the activities of the resident coordinators, United Nations agencies and recipient Governments. In order to be effective, the proposed programme support unit must have sufficient authority to ensure the vital give and take between Governments and the United Nations system as a whole.

62. Mr. AFOLABI (Nigeria) said that his Government had a history of providing humanitarian relief whenever and wherever the need arose. The critical refugee situation caused by the recent Gulf crisis had strained the resources of UNHCR and other relief agencies, as the number of refugees had increased from 2.8 million to more than 8 million in recent times, and had overshadowed the continuing refugee crisis in Africa. United Nations agencies were making all possible efforts to provide relief for the 800,000 displaced persons in Liberia, but needs still exceeded available assistance. UNDP was especially well-positioned to provide assistance because of its grass-roots connections in the countries of operation, and the establishment of a humanitarian programmes support unit would further facilitate its work. According to paragraph 37 of document DP/1991/20, the Administrator had not included funding for such a unit in his submission for the 1992-1993 administrative budget. Given the importance of the proposed unit, his delegation hoped that a workable funding mechanism could be found.

63. Mr. PRIESTLEY (Senior Adviser for Humanitarian Affairs), in reply to the Observer for Yemen, said that the Governing Council had allocated $500,000 for the year from the Special Programme Resources (SPR) for needs assessments with respect to displaced persons. Although a substantial portion of that amount had already been committed for studies in various countries, he hoped that at least an initial contribution could be made towards alleviating the problems in Yemen. In addition, the Secretary-General had announced, at a recent meeting with African Heads of State and representatives of United Nations agencies, that a high-level mission would be sent to the Persian Gulf region for the purpose of needs assessment and the formulation of proposed United Nations system responses.

64. He agreed with the Observer for Bangladesh that the varying mandates of different relief agencies presented practical problems of coordination. One way of overcoming those problems, which had proved effective in Ethiopia, was to form a standing committee, or "emergency prevention and preparedness group", which involved all partners in relief efforts. However, the Observer for Bangladesh had rightly pointed out that the host countries should be more closely involved, and the programmes support unit, if approved, would work to enhance that involvement.

(Mr. Priestley)

65. In reply to the representative of Nigeria, he said that the positive steps being taken to address the problems in the Persian Gulf region should allow the international community to give due priority to Africa's refugee problems, which were of unprecedented scope and seriousness.

66. The PRESIDENT said that if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Council agreed that the Drafting Group should begin the elaboration of a draft decision on agenda item 3 (c).

67. It was so decided.

OTHER FUNDS AND PROGRAMMES (DP/1991/46)

68. Ms. CAPELING-ALAKIJA (Director, United Nations Development Fund for Women) said that the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) considered monitoring and evaluation to be one of its strongest functions. The Fund's mandate to be experimental and catalytic, to test new approaches and to be an advocate for women required a capacity to document the process and product of project experience and to disseminate the findings. Already, trends emerging from thematic programme reviews were beginning to guide the Fund's policy directions and programming decisions. In 1990, programme delivery had increased by 45 per cent over 1989. In order to maintain that positive trend, delivery targets would continue to be part of the Fund's performance indicators.

69. Human resources development was a priority both in UNIFEM programmes and in the Fund's personnel policies. The professional development of UNIFEM staff was supported by training opportunities in computer operations, communications, gender analysis, planning, and supervisory skills. The ongoing process of management planning and the new performance appraisal mechanisms had helped rationalize the utilization of the Fund's limited financial and human resources.

70. By the end of 1990, 10 national committees for UNIFEM had been officially established in donor countries and six additional countries were in the process of setting up their committees. The Philippines National Committee, the first national committee to be established in a developing country, would serve as a model for other developing countries. National committees were the Fund's base in a country. They built alliances with women's organizations, non-governmental organizations, the business community, academics and parliamentarians, fostered support among decision-makers, and raised funds from their respective constituencies.

71. Women in developing countries had a vested interest in protecting and improving their environment, and experience showed that they could make a significant contribution to environmental conservation when enabled to do so. All too often, however, in their struggle for survival, women had little choice other than to damage the very environment on which they depended.

(Ms. Capeling-Alakija)

Moreover, women's knowledge and experience were often completely ignored by those involved in designing and implementing development programmes. The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development would provide the ideal opportunity to emphasize the impact of environmental degradation on millions of poor women and to highlight the major role women everywhere could play in maintaining the finite ecological resource base.

72. Through a cooperative effort, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UNIFEM, the Division for the Advancement of Women and the United Nations Statistical Office had produced a very important report about the world's women which would be issued later in the month.

73. At the Pledging Conference for 1991, total pledges to the Fund had been estimated at $9.4 million, a 13 per cent increase over pledges for 1990. The national committees, non-governmental organizations and women's organizations had been instrumental in encouraging government contributions and in raising additional resources. The Fund was continuing to seek new avenues of support from foundations and from the private sector.

74. Mr. VAN UFFORD (Netherlands) said that his delegation was in favour of maintaining the Fund as a separate entity in autonomous association with UNDP.

75. The Fund had a relatively high financial reserve. The estimates for the end of 1991 showed an amount of $17.93 million in the reserve fund. Compared to an annual income of about $11 million, that was a considerable figure. In the light of the Consultative Committee's decision to solve the problem of financial accumulations through the introduction of a partial-funding formula, UNIFEM would have to enlarge its programme execution. Such an enlargement should build on the positive results of the Fund's regional programmes. In that way, a certain degree of policy continuity could be guaranteed. His delegation welcomed the Administrator's proposal to increase the Fund's staff by two new posts.

76. The Fund should supply additional information regarding its cooperation with private funds and the conditions under which such funds provided resources to UNIFEM. It would be useful to have an overview of the increase in private funding as compared with the increase in government contributions.

77. Mr. SAHLMANN (Germany) said that the UNIFEM report (DP/1991/46) did not provide sufficient information on the Fund's experimentation with new approaches to promoting the interests of women and its dissemination of the results of such work. Moreover, the report did not give details about how the effect that UNIFEM intended to ensure that experience gained in pilot projects for the promotion of women could be used in projects carried out by other organizations of the United Nations system. It would also be helpful to have more information on the Fund's cooperation with member States. In future, the Fund's reports should contain detailed information on the projects and

(Mr. Sahlmann, Germany)

measures actually implemented during the previous year; it did not suffice to provide figures in the form in which they appeared in the Fund's 1991 report.

78. Mrs. ESGUERRA (Philippines) said that UNIFEM had contributed to the preparation of the first Philippine Development Plan for Women, a companion document to the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan for 1987-1992. Her delegation was pleased that the Fund had continued to provide support by funding a project to assist government ministries in implementing, monitoring, evaluating and updating the Plan. That would ensure that women's concerns and needs would become integral parts of all economic and social sectors of Philippine society.

79. It was gratifying that the Philippine National Committee on UNIFEM was being used as a model for launching national committees in developing countries. The Philippine National Committee would be highly instrumental in emphasizing the relationship between gender and development and expanding support for UNIFEM and its programmes.

80. Mr. SOUTTER (Canada) said that his delegation wished to have more information about the Fund's plans to disseminate information on the results of its projects, ways of multiplying its successes and enlisting the assistance of other development bodies. The Fund should provide details about the results of its assessment of bottlenecks in project implementation by type of implementing agency.

81. Canada did not support any proposal to rearrange the Fund's reporting relationships, since the Fund's success was at least in part due to the Director's direct reporting relationship to the Administrator.

82. In 1991, Canada's contribution to UNIFEM would amount to $Can 1.5 million. Canada also funded one of the Fund's largest projects in Zimbabwe. In a time of budgetary constraint, UNIFEM was one of the few organizations to which Canada would provide an increase in 1991. That increase was in recognition of both the excellence of the Fund's work and of the importance Canada attached to women in development.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.